

Civil War Ironclads

Subject: Social Studies, Art

Duration: 45 minutes

Location: Classroom, Fort Donelson NB water batteries

Key Vocabulary: military theater, armament, boiler stack, flotilla, timberclads, ironclads, river batteries, "brown water" navy, bow, and stern

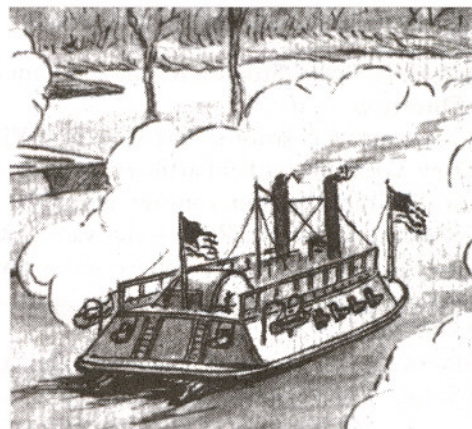
Related Activities: a) collect pictures of Civil War weapons for b) research military innovations started during the Civil War (i.e., hot air balloons, submarines, etc.)

Standards:

National: S.S Strand VIII (Science Technology)

State: Kentucky – S.S. 2.20 and Art 2.25

Tennessee – S.S. 5.03, L.A. 1.01



Objectives. The students will be able to: a) identify the parts of a Civil War gunboat or ironclad and, b) see how innovative design led to many naval victories for the Union.

Method. The students will create pictures of a Civil War ironclad gunboat. The process of this activity will show students the naval advantages due to the specific structure and materials used.

Background. Superiority on the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers played a key role in the defeat of Forts Henry and Donelson. This led to the eventual Union occupation of Tennessee. Much of the Union Army's success can be credited to the Mississippi River ironclads called the "brown water" navy. These boats were designed to be used against Confederate positions in the Western theater. Some of the ironclads used during the battles at Henry and Donelson were called the City Series (named for cities along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers): the *St. Louis*, *Cincinnati*, *Carondelet*, *Cairo*, *Mound City*, *Pittsburgh*, and the *Louisville*. The armament for these boats consisted of thirteen guns. Each boat was identified by the color of the band which was painted on the boiler stack. The gunboats had 2 ½ inches of charcoal iron over 24 inches of oak on the bow of the boat. This was located at an important strategic point for battle.

Materials

- Internet access/other research about ironclads
- Art paper/Sketch paper
- Ruler
- Charcoal or pencil
- Guide sheets for drawing (see Supplementary Materials)

Suggested Procedure

1. Familiarize the students with pictures of Civil War ironclads from textbooks and web sites.
2. Discuss the economic factors related to building ironclads.
3. Review the purposes for using the heavy charcoal iron over the wooden part of the boats.
4. Read about Admiral Andrew H. Foote, the naval officer who led the gunboat flotilla during the Union attack against Confederate forts and his specific attacks on the batteries of Forts Henry and Donelson.
5. Give students the guide sheets: draw a Civil War "ironclad" gunboat and let them follow the steps to draw their own boat and to add creative touches to identify each unique picture.

Evaluation

When students have finished the drawings they can make a display for other classes to see. Students from other classes can vote on their favorite drawings.

Extension

(*Challenge*) Interested students could create scale models of ironclads after reviewing specific dimensions of the boats, the oak, and the iron plates.